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THE SECDEF'S RECENT TRANSITION GUIDANCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR "SUSTAINING OUR STRATEGIC POSITION"

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It is still unclear just how far the United States is prepared to go in rebuilding its pre-Iraqi War alliances. There are strong indications, however, that the Bush administration is very interested in achieving the security, stability, peace, and prosperity that will enable other countries to buy American products, continue the development of democratic and free market institutions, and advance human rights—as well as cooperate on shared problems such as illegal drugs, terrorism, the environment, and illegal immigration.

One indicator of this policy approach is the Secretary of Defense's military transformation guidance outlined in April 2003. In that guidance, Mr. Rumsfeld stated the need to engage the U.S. Army and other military services in "A process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation . . . which helps underpin peace and stability in the world." The Secretary also stated the need to ". . . protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position. . ."[1] That being the case, the United States is very likely to become more and more involved in building regional and global security cooperation, and in stabilizing unconventional asymmetrical internal conflicts in important parts of the world. In these terms, U.S. and other civilian and military leaders must examine the linkage among security, stability, development, democracy, and sovereignty, and the implications for all the instruments of governmental power.

The Linkage among Stability, Sovereignty, and National Survival.

In *The Constant Gardner*, John LeCarre vividly captures the contemporary linkage between stability, sovereignty, and national survival. He answers the question of "When is a state not a state?" from the point of view of a common sense practitioner:

> I would suggest to you that, these days, very roughly, the Qualifications for being a civilized state amount to—electoral suffrage, ah—protection of life and property—um, justice, health and education for all, at least to a certain level—then the maintenance of a sound administrative infrastructure—and roads, transport, drains, et cetera—and—what else is there?—ah yes, the equitable collection of taxes. If a state fails to deliver on at least a quorum of the above—then one *has* to say the contract between state and citizen begins to look pretty *shaky*—and if it fails on *all* of the above, then it's a *failed* state, as we say these days.[2]

Colombia is a particularly good example of this situation. The narco-terrorist alliance in that country represents an unconventional asymmetric threat to the authority of the central government. Through murder, kidnapping, corruption, intimidation, and other means of coercion, these violent internal nonstate actors compromise the exercise of the state's authority. The government becomes progressively less and less capable of performing the tasks of governance and exercising the sovereignty of the state. As a result, the narco-terrorists become more and more wealthy and powerful, and the country deteriorates further and further toward failed state status. Yet, in the minds of many, this remains a law enforcement issue. It is not considered a threat to

Colombian national sovereignty and survival. In light of the dynamics of violent stateless actors, however, this is reason for worldwide concern—and action.

Implications for the Instruments of Governmental Power.

Ample evidence clearly demonstrates that—without security throughout the entire national territory, government cannot guarantee an effective judicial system, human rights, and the rule of law; long-term socio-economic development; responsible democratic processes; sustainable peace; or exercise its sovereignty. Security begins with the provision of personal protection to individual members of the society. It extends to protection from violent internal (including criminals) and external enemies—and perhaps from repressive internal institutions (e.g., military, police, "secret police," and self-appointed vigilante groups). The security problem ends with the establishment of firm but fair control over the national territory and the people in it (i.e., moral sovereignty).

The common denominator of the security dialogue is the underlying issue of national, regional, and global instability. Solutions to the instability exploited by a given nonstate actor— or set of actors—are based on the fundamental requirement that the armed forces, police, and relevant civilian instruments of power develop a working relationship that can and will facilitate an effective response to a given perpetrator of violence—regardless of label. In these terms, experience shows that attacks on the stability and sovereignty of the state require a unified but multidimensional political-psychological-economic-military/police (i.e., civil-military) response. That is, a violent internal or external opponent can only be finally defeated by a superior organization, a unified civil-military strategy, and carefully applied soft and hard power.

Conclusions.

Over the years, national security has been viewed largely in terms of military defenses against external military threats. Given the opportunities and threats inherent in the predominantly interdependent global security environment, that is clearly too narrow a conception. The historical record demonstrates that the better a power or government is at conducting the military aspects of conventional war near the top of the conflict ladder, the more a potential external or internal enemy is inclined to move asymmetrically toward the predominantly political-psychological conflict at the bottom of the warfare ladder. As a consequence, this conclusion espouses a forward-looking, proactive, civil-military approach to ". . . protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position . . ."[3] It would combine the potent virtues of the proverbial military-police 'iron fist' within the political-diplomatic 'velvet glove'. "Thus, instead of thinking of the various manifestations of war as being singularly military, it would be more sensible to regard them as steps on the ladder of warfare as a whole. . ."[4]

Endnotes.

1. *Transformation Planning Guidance*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, April 2003.
2. John LeCarre, *The Constant Gardner*, New York: Scribner, 2001, p. 137.
3. *Transformation Planning Guidance*.
4. General Sir Frank Kitson, *Warfare as a Whole,* London: Faber and Faber, 1987, p. 2.